

To Build a Fire (Simplified Version)

The man walked through the cold, white snow. His dog followed close behind. The man wore thick clothes, but he still felt the icy air on his face. The sky was gray, and the trees stood still. There were no sounds, only the crunch of his boots in the snow.

He knew it was very cold. He had been told never to walk alone when it was this cold. But the man thought he was strong and smart. He could make the trip. He would walk to the camp, and he would be fine.

The man stopped to look at his watch. It was almost noon. He thought he would get to the camp by six o'clock. He smiled, sure that he would make it. The dog did not feel so sure. The dog knew the cold better than the man. It was too cold to be outside.

The man walked by a creek. He stepped carefully. If he fell in the water, he would get wet. If he got wet, he would freeze. He had to stay dry. The dog walked ahead and looked back at the man. The dog wanted to stop. It wanted to rest. But the man kept walking.

Suddenly, the man stepped on thin ice. His foot broke through! His leg went into the water. Now his pants were wet and cold. He had to stop and build a fire.

The man found a place by a tree. He gathered sticks and twigs. His fingers were cold, but he worked fast. He made a little pile of dry wood. Then he pulled out a match. His hand shook as he lit it. The match burned, and the fire began to grow.

The man smiled. He held his hands over the fire. The heat felt good. His dog sat close, too, warming its fur. But then, a little wind blew. The snow from the tree above fell down. The fire went out.

The man frowned. He had to start again. He grabbed more sticks and made another pile. His hands were colder now. He tried to light a match, but his fingers would not move well. The match fell. He tried again. The fire would not start.

The man began to worry. His hands were numb. He could not feel them. He hit his hands on his legs to wake them up, but it did not help. The dog watched him. The dog knew the man was in trouble.

The man thought about running. Maybe if he ran, he would stay warm. But he was too tired. His feet felt heavy. He sat down in the snow. The dog barked at him. The dog wanted him to get up, but the man did not move.

The dog waited for a long time. When the man did not get up, the dog turned and ran toward the camp. The dog knew it had to find someone. It had to find help.

In the cold and quiet snow, the man sat still. The lesson of the cold was clear: never walk alone when it is too cold.